

**DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING #5**  
**9/10/03**

**Cambridge Public Library**  
**Main Library Expansion Project Phase 2**

Cambridge Rindge and Latin School

DAC Members present: Co-Chairs Rich Rossi, Alan Burne, Ruth Butler, and Elizabeth Gibb; Janet Axelrod, Ted Carpenter, John Gintell, Arlyne Jackson, James Roosevelt Jr., Hugh Russell, Lynn Shirey, Charles Sullivan, Victoria Solomon, Emily Norris.

**Introduction** *by Alan Burne*

- The meeting will focus on the “Sense of the Building”, recognizing that materials will be selected and approved and details will be developed over the roughly 25 weeks of Design Development and 25 weeks of Construction Documents.

**Overview** *by William Rawn*

- The architectural goals were reviewed.
- **Architectural Goals:**
  1. A Populist library in a very democratic place.
    - A place of opportunity
    - Celebrate an egalitarian culture
    - Capture Cambridge history of welcoming an ever-changing population
  2. Library in the Park.
    - Building and landscape should be mutually supportive, with each enhancing the other.
    - Building should provide an appropriate edge to the park
    - Provide interior experience of being connected to park
  3. A Library.
    - It should be immediately clear that this is a Library, not a community center
    - You should see books at the entry, and be welcomed to the process of reading.
  4. Belief in natural light
    - Critical addition to the quality of life inside space
    - Day lighting provides necessary contribution to ecological sustainability
    - Welcome in New England winter
  5. Openness and Accessibility – very important values (refers back to point #1)
    - Welcoming, warm, friendly, embracing
    - Not intimidating, not elitist
    - Easy to orient oneself, easy to understand
    - Transparent: view into building – view thru building
    - Not incidentally – critical for staffing of library
  6. Connection between new and old
    - Very vibrant in both. Equal strength or activity
    - Appropriate balance between seamless program and discrete connection (protecting architectural integrity of old building)
    - Creating set of spaces that do not exist in old building
      - a) At grade-connect to park

- b) Normal light and views out
- c) Large open spaces rather than smaller defined space

### **Design Presentation by Cliff Gayley**

- After a quick presentation of the plans, program distribution, and conceptual division of the Addition into four “zones”, reviewed in previous meetings, the exterior concept of the building was presented, as follows:
  - The addition would be of contemporary design, not mimicking the style of the historic structure, though care and consideration would be given to designing a clear aesthetic relationship between the buildings;
  - The south façade is proposed to be built with terra cotta elements, matching the color of the existing masonry, between two layers of glass. This façade system would be designed to allow the masonry color to be read across the new and historic structure, while shading the Library patrons from direct sunlight, reflecting natural light into the Library, keeping the views to the park unobstructed, and increasing the thermal comfort and environmental sustainability of the Project.
  - The north elevation would have large windows facing the school, to increase the real and perceived safety of the area between the buildings.
- Photomontages of model photographs were shown to give an idea of how the facades might look and feel.

### **DAC Comments**

- What materials are to be used on the opaque parts of the façade? *Cliff Gayley*: Current thinking suggests stone on Zone 2 and metal panel on Zone 4.
- How will the window / terra cotta system be maintained? *Cliff Gayley*: there will be a 2 1/2 to 3 foot gap between the glass faces to allow access for maintenance. *Bill Rawn*: This type of system has been well tested in Europe, and is roughly analogous to the systems recently constructed in the Manu-Life and Genzyme buildings in Cambridge.
- Will there be operable windows? *Cliff Gayley*: Yes.
- Will there be solar panels? *Cliff Gayley*: There are no plans at this time to use solar panels.
- Will the natural light permeating the library damage the books? *Susan Flannery*: The most sensitive books are to be stored on the north side of the library, so will be protected.
- Does this plan assume the removal of the 1967 wing? *Bill Rawn*: Yes.
- What is current thinking on location and feeling of café? *Cliff Gayley*: The cafe will not be formal, or have a kitchen. The location in connector between the historic structure and the addition should give a dynamic feel similar to a sidewalk café.
- *Janet Axelrod*: Pleased that the terra cotta color will match the existing stone; would applaud further efforts to create harmony between the new and old as the design progresses; is concerned about the space on the North side of the building; thinks the design team has “done a great job”.
- *Emily Norris*: Concerned about horizontality of the design of the addition.
- *Caroline Hunter*: What will the students see? Concerned about space between the School and Library.
- *Ruth Butler*: Really like the contrast between old and new; concerned about maintenance.

- *John Gintell*: Really like the contrast between old and new – a more literal use of the old style in the new building would make a “messy marriage”; concerned about maintenance, concerned about too much light causing glare on computer screens.
- *Hugh Russell*: Likes this design of an elegant 21st century building next to an elegant 19th century building. Likes the use of new but established technology to work with challenge of southern exposure. Is excited by the design. Would like to see red slate incorporated into the addition.
- *Ted Carpenter*: “Extraordinarily compelling”. Would like to see more visible references to the historic building as the design progresses.
- *Charles Sullivan*: Design process has produced the hoped for results. A contemporary design of our times strikes the right balance, complimenting and contrasting with the historic building. How will it age? Materials and systems should be specified which have a good track record for low maintenance and good “fool proof” survival. Wants cutting edge design with proven materials. Landscape design should take into account 20 to 50 years of growth.

## Public Input

- Suggestion: look into moving columns away from glass wall to allow improved seating next to windows.
- Concern about getting kids to third floor. Susan Flannery: Parents currently use elevator or stairs. Experience at Reading Library, which has Children’s Department on upper floor with no complaints. Children are usually relegated to the basement, and the third floor location will be superior in terms of both natural light and safety.
- Concern that addition doesn’t look enough like a library, and that it should look more like the 19th century building.
- Concern that Mechanical Engineer not allow any uncomfortably warm or cold spaces.

## DAC Comments

- DAC questions and concerns can always be addressed to Alan Burne on an ongoing basis.
- What are targeted age ranges of Children’s spaces and Young Adults? *Susan Flannery*: Children’s: newborn through 8th grade; Young Adults: High School age.